

THE CHRISTIAN FREEMAN

AND

Record of Unitarian Worthies

BEING A HISTORY OF THE UNITARIAN REFORMATION OF RELIGION IN EUROPE AND AMERICA
DURING THE LAST THREE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS.

With some Account of the most Notable Works written by Unitarians.

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JOB, THE AFRICAN.

THIS poor fellow's romantic history was a favourite story of our great great-grandfathers. He was a Mohammedan, the son of Solliman Dgiallo; and who was hereditary high priest of Bonda, in Foota near the river Gambia.

In 1730, as he and another man were driving his cattle across the country of Jagra, he was seized by a party of hostile natives, carried to Joar, and there sold to the captain of an English ship, who sailed with him to Maryland in America, and there sold him again to a tobacco planter. Here Job was employed in tending cattle. He often withdrew into the woods to pray, but a white boy used to watch him at his devotions, mock him, and throw dirt at him. Job resolved to escape, and set off through the forests till he came to Delaware Bay. Here he was seized and sent back to his master. He then wrote to his father, an Arabic letter, begging him to redeem him. This letter was sent to England, where it luckily fell into the hands of a Mr. Oglethorpe, who sent it to Oxford to be translated. When he learned its contents he was so much pleased with them that he purchased Job from his master and set him free. Job afterwards visited London, where he was employed by our learned men in translating into English many Arabic manuscripts and medals. The celebrated Sir Hans Sloane made a friend of him, and by his influence Job was introduced to the King and to many of the nobility. He spent fourteen months in England, and made himself a great favourite, not only by his talents but by his sweet and amiable disposition.

He begged to return to his native country and his father, to whom he was much attached; and he was allowed to do

so. He took with him £500 worth of presents from Queen Caroline and his aristocratic friends; and in 1734 the Royal African Company sent him home, ordering their agents to show him the greatest respect.

Soon after arriving in Africa he met with some men of the same tribe as those who originally kidnapped him. They told him that among the goods which the captain gave for him was a pistol; and that the Chief who sold him became so fond of this pistol that he used to carry it slung round his neck by a string, and loaded. One day it went off and killed him. His crime was thus its own punishment.

A little later Job met one of his own countrymen, who was greatly delighted at seeing him returned, for only one other man had ever come back to that country after being once carried off by white men. Job sent by him a message to his father to tell him of his arrival, and bid him not to come down, but wait for Job to reach his home, "for it was fit that the young should go to the old, and not the old to the young." The English captain who was then with Job says, "He used to pray frequently, and behaved himself with great mildness and affability to all, so that he was very popular and well-beloved.

In a few weeks the messenger came back from Job's country with the sad news that Job's father had lived to receive the letters that his son had sent him from England—he was now dead. With the message came troops of Job's old friends, but in spite of his joy at seeing them, he wept grievously for his father's death.

In April, 1735, Job left his English friend the captain, in whose charge he had hitherto been, declaring with tears in his eyes, that he would spend his days in trying to do good for the English, who

had saved him from slavery and treated him so generously. A year and a half afterwards Sir Hans Sloane received a letter from him, repeating his gratitude, promising his help to English commerce in Africa, and making suggestions for its extensions.

He had so extraordinary a memory that at fifteen he could say the whole of the Koran by heart, and whilst in England he wrote out three copies of it entirely from memory. He used to laugh when his friends spoke of having forgotten anything, and told them he had never forgotten anything in his life, and wondered that anybody should.

All the accounts of him speak highly of his mild and compassionate disposition. He had a clear head and great powers of reasoning. Though firmly attached to the religion of his birth, he conversed and argued upon all religious questions with great temper and impartiality, and showed a great desire to find the truth. A clergyman who knew him said he was a person of great piety and learning. He did not believe in a sensual paradise, nor many other of the superstitions common among uneducated Mohammedans. He was very constant in his devotion to God, but never prayed to Mohammed; and he thought it unlawful to address prayer to any but God Himself. He had a great veneration for God's name, and never uttered it without a solemn pause. His dislike of idolatry gave him a great aversion to pictures, so that it was with the greatest difficulty that he could be induced to sit for his own. He at last agreed to sit for it, on being convinced that Protestants did not worship pictures, and that his friends wanted it only to keep them in mind of him. (It is engraved in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for 1750, and gives a most pleasant idea of Job's appearance). He begged to be drawn in his native dress, to which the painter objected that he could not draw it, for he had never seen it. Upon which Job answered, "If you can't draw a dress you never saw, why do other painters presume to draw God, whom no one ever saw?"

Job was a Mohammedan. Why, then, have we given this notice of him? That we may preserve the testimony of this thoughtful stranger to the impression which the Bible makes upon an unprejudiced mind. A translation of the New Testament in Job's own language was given him; and "when he had read it, he told me," says Mr. Bluett in his

Memoirs, p. 52, "he had perused it with a great deal of care, but could not find a word in it of three Gods, as some people talk." Another account adds, "He declared he was astonished that those who took their notions from Scripture, should entertain such an opinion as the Athanasian doctrine." And his biographer complains that he "was so fixed in the belief of one God that it was not possible to give him any notion of the Trinity," which is often the case.

BEAUTIES OF THE BIBLE.

PROMINENT among the multiform beauties pertaining to the Bible, are its freshness — its ever-growing freshness — and perfect accuracy of statement and description. Merely human productions by repetition pall upon the intellectual taste; the apologies *credenda*, philosophies and "theologies" of men soon become tiresome; but in the Divine Word there is a vigour, with all the added qualities of sympathy and tenderness for all of human kind, that irresistibly enlist our fullest admiration and love. In the shibboleths of sectarian creed, as in the vain philosophies of sceptical speculation, there is a superabundance of coldness and repulsiveness ungenial to Christian sympathy, and shocking to the hungering, yearning heart of the true seeker after religious truth. While in the gospel—as, for instance, in the hallowed teachings of our blessed Saviour—there is a gushing fulness of warmest affection and most ardent sympathy for us poor mortals, created "subject to vanity" or frailty. In regard to the accuracy and consistency of the Bible, let us hearken to what the learned Gausson has to say:—"An astonishing feature of the Word of God is, notwithstanding the time at which its compositions were written, and the multitude of the topics to which it alludes, there are none of those mistakes which the science of each succeeding age discovered in the books preceding; none of those absurdities which modern astronomy indicates, in such great numbers, in the writings of the ancients. Such fidelity to nature and true philosophy—such undeviating accordance with all the promptings of generosity and charity—all this truth and loyalty to truth set forth the holy Scriptures as "a burning and shining light" of inestimable value to our race. It is a book which carries its narrations to the most distant epochs of the future and the glorious scenes of the last day.

J. L. C. GRIFFIN.

THE HAPPY HOME.

SINCE man must work, the privilege is accorded to him of time to work uninterruptedly, for he is not hindered by the bearing and rearing of children during the best years of his life, and he is not expected to keep in comfortable order the home to which he hastens for rest when his work is done. We grow so accustomed to our benefits, like the daisy to the shining of the sun, that few men realise what a blessing they possess in having a home to return to when weary labour is over and a shelter must be sought from the night. Nearly every industrious married man has a warm, clean house, or set of rooms of his own, where he may shut out intruders, eat his meal in peace, amuse himself and his family in the way they like best, and rest upon a clean, comfortable bed. If he is a sensible man, and has made choice of a good wife, he may, on leaving off work for the day, hasten home to a little Eden, where the delightful atmosphere of peace and contentment will rest and content him as soon as his feet cross the threshold; where a charming woman whom he loves, and who has yielded herself to be the faithful creator and keeper of his happiness, meets him with gentle caresses and tenderest ministrations of comfort and hospitality, and where his beautiful children, clustering round him with joyous cries and fond embraces, show how they have been taught to revere and love their father. Every working man should have a home like this, and may have—for neither money nor learning are needed to build it up. I have most frequently seen such homes when practising medicine among the poor.

It is the privilege of woman to enjoy and keep the home. Wherever she is, and whatever her circumstances—though she live in a palace, a log cabin, or a cave—according to her needs so will her home be; and if suited to her own wants, will amply meet the wants of her husband, of the man who loves her. But she cannot enjoy this haven of rest, this secure refuge, this hiding-place when sick or sad, this brooding-nest, where in silence or secrecy she develops into existence, moulds the characters, and, therefore, sways the destinies of future generations, without unceasing care and labour. Man provides the rough material, which woman must adapt and use for their mutual comfort.

The young husband brings home his bride in triumph to their cottage, and the

very next morning a fire must be kindled and a breakfast cooked for them both; after this there are dishes to wash, the house to sweep, beds to arrange, the evening meal to be prepared, and the wife's toilet to be made freshly and becomingly; for if she ceases to keep herself as attractive as when a girl, how can she hope to satisfy her husband? Indeed, a wife who does not grow more and more attractive as years pass over her head is but a weak woman, and hardly deserves a husband.

THE OPEN GATES OF HEAVEN.

"JANITOR, hasten and lock the gate;
Be sure you bolt fast—bolt faster;
Let the rebels wait—for ever wait—
But don't go and tell your Master."

'Twas grand to see stern Peter's look—
The lightning glance of his eye;
Save this no other note he took
Of the selfish impious cry.

Hark to yon soft seraphic strain—
How it swells, then melts away!
It floats on the buoyant air again,
And spreads like the beaming day.

Lo, through the golden portals move,
By the seraph-minstrel led,
A saintly band, whose pennon, Love,
By their might has triumphed.

Sweet youth with winning smile is there,
And manhood in graceful prime,
There blushing maid and matron fair,
And age with its brow sublime.

On, on they pass, but, ah, that light!
Its waves in beauty flow on;
It bathes their robes in its essence bright,
As if God's pure look on them shone.

Deep silence reigns—a Presence nears
The bright, the happy, the free;
With soul entranced, unnerved by fears,
In music they whisper—'tis He!

He stands, the peerless one, His face,
Erst beaming with melting love,
Is flushing now with heavenly grace—
He mirrors the One above.

"Children pass on, a welcome take;
Earth's path ye have nobly trod;
For mine, your own, for virtue's sake,
Share the bliss of your Father—God."

With lofty mien and altered brow,
He passed the exultant throng
To the gates of gold, whose movements now
Were sweet as the evensong.

"Away, away, ye churlish band!"
With thrilling sound the word went forth—
"Who seeks a home in Fatherland,
Shall prove in charity his worth."

Then turning to his watchful guard,
"To thy grand charge be faithful still:
These gates to no one shall be barred,
Whose heart obeys the Father's will.
Fulfil his high command—fulfil!"

Ilminster.

E. WHITFIELD.

WAYSIDE GATHERINGS.

FRIENDSHIPS.—I guard well my friendships. They are worth more to me than any conceivable fame.—*Whittier.*

LOYALTY TO TRUTH.—I will creep towards the light, even if the light has made its way through a rent in the temple.—*Coleridge.*

CREEDS.—John Wesley very piquantly and truly said that a "string of opinions, be they ever so true, and ever so strongly held, is no more Christian faith than a string of beads is Christian holiness."

THE VALUE OF ACTION.—How can a man learn to know himself? By observation, never; but by action. Endeavour to do thy duty and thou shalt know what is within thee. But what is thy duty? The demands of the day.

SCARCELY A SERMON.—A sermon being once preached before James I., in which there was more of politics than of religion, his Majesty asked Bishop Andrews what he thought of it. "Please your Majesty," replied the Bishop, "by every charitable construction it may pass for a sermon."

THE NEW TESTAMENT.—Take away the Christian revelation we might, in the flush of youth and joy and hope, feel that we were under a fatherly providence; but we should hardly feel so did we stand by the lifeless form of our best-beloved; did we survive the hopeless wreck of earthly fortunes, or were we wasted by disease, or racked with chronic sufferings.—*A. P. Peabody, D.D.*

FORGIVE AND FORGET.—I heard two little girls talking under my window. One of them said, in a voice full of indignation: "If I were in your place, I'd never speak to her again. I'd be angry with her as long as I live." I listened, feeling anxious about the reply. My heart beat more lightly when it came. "No, Lou," answered the other, in a sweet and gentle voice, "I wouldn't be so for all the world. I'm going to forgive and forget just as soon as I can."

A FAIR REPLY.—A gentleman suspected of being a Unitarian was questioned by a newspaper about his religious opinion. He said: "I have no objection to say that I am a Unitarian, and I am liberal enough to allow all who choose to differ from me. I have been a disbeliever in total depravity, and inclined to doubt the existence of a literal hell; but reading your JOURNAL, and the experience I have had in the present campaign, has rather shaken my opinions, and inclines me to accept the most extreme views on these doctrinal points."

BRILLIANT BUT USELESS.—Sir Astley Cooper, on visiting Paris, was asked by the surgeon *en chef* of the Empire how many times he had performed a certain wonderful feat of surgery. He replied that he had performed the operation thirteen times. "Ah, but monsieur, I have done him one hundred and sixty times." "How many times did you save his life?" continued the Frenchman, after he had looked into the blank amazement of Sir Astley's face. "I," said the Englishman, "saved eleven out of thirteen. How many did you save of one hundred and sixty?" "Ah, monsieur, I lose dem all; but de operation was very brilliant." Of how many popular ministers might the same verdict be given! Souls are not saved, but the preaching is very brilliant. Thousands are attracted and operated upon by the rhetorician's art, but what if he should have to say of his admirers, "I lose them all, but the sermons were very brilliant?"

UPLIFTING THOUGHTS.—That whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future preponderate over the present, raises us in the scale of thinking beings.

LEARNING.—Aristotle was asked what were the advantages of learning. He replied, "It is an ornament to a man in prosperity and a refuge to him in adversity."

HIGH CHURCH PRACTICES.—Mr. Spurgeon has discovered that, while in seven ritualistic churches in London only £7 13s. 2d. was subscribed to foreign missions, for a whole year, the choir of one alone cost £1000 a year. This is playing High Church to a pretty tune.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS.—Nobody appreciates a little attention so much as a child, and with no one will a little go so far. Children have claims upon us all the more sacred if they are friendless and neglected. They have rights which older people are bound to respect.

ESCAPED.—We have heard of the remarkable escape of a whole family from probable death. One evening their house was struck by lightning, badly shattered and set on fire, while they were all absent attending the theatre! We hope the friends of the drama will not make too much of this "special Providence."

THE RIGHT SPIRIT.—The Bishop of Exeter, at an ordination service, stated that he had no hesitation in saying that he looked upon the ministers of every denomination in the country as true ministers of Christ. He knew no test by which their work could be tried which would not come to that result, because he saw that men under their ministry had accepted God's truth; that the Lord had so blessed their work that he could not doubt for one moment that their word had his approval, and that He had sent them.

LITTLE THINGS.—The preciousness of little things was never more beautifully expressed than by the following:—"Little words are the sweetest to hear; little charities fly farthest, and stay longest on the wing; little lakes are the stillest; little hearts the fullest, and little farms best tilled. Little books are the most read, and little songs the most loved. And when nature would make anything especially rare and beautiful, she makes it little—little pearls, little diamonds, little dewa." Everybody calls that little which he loves best on earth. We once heard a good sort of a man speak of his little wife, and we fancied that she must be a perfect little bijou of a wife. We saw her, and she weighed two hundred pounds. We were surprised! But then, it was no joke—the man meant it. He could put his wife in his heart, and have room for other things besides; and what was she but precious, and what was she but little?—*B. F. Taylor.*

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